

6. What to ask your shearer pre shearing season.

The handling of your alpacas is very important regardless of having 2 alpacas or 100+ alpacas, you should be asking your shearer. What shearing system is being used by your shearer and why? (Shearpac spent 5 years searching round the world to find the worlds best alpaca shearer, Shearpac is now using his shearing system and study from him) before finding the worlds best alpaca shearer Shearpac tried every possible shearing style available. We spend 5 years trying out several different shearing techniques, including several different ground techniques as well as using the table for shearing. Shearpac found the 9 cut system (Ground shearing system) to be the best there is to date, since then there has been many years of input by alpaca Vets and associated Shearers to improving the shearing each year. Shearpac is dedicated to continuing to improve what is being done in the alpaca shearing industry in NZ. Shearpac is also dedicated to providing the top Shearers in the world and have them available to all our clients.

What combs are being used to shear your alpacas and why? Shearpac has found the only comb to be using is the 9 tooth comb (this is the only comb used world wide by professional Shearers) there are many reason for this. To find out more about the 9 tooth comb and why it is used please contact Shearpac

Why shear the prime fibre off first in one piece and without second cuts? How does this benefit the alpaca owner and effect the end price you will get for your fibre? This is important regardless of having 2 alpacas or 100+ alpacas as this will help cover shearing cost. Preparation of alpacas before shearing can also benefit your fibre and the price you will get for your fibre. Regardless if your fibre is for personal use or is being professionally milled. You will want the best shearing available, Please contact Shearpac to find out how to get the best results.

There has been many years spent designing everything Shearpac now uses for shearing alpacas. This includes the combs, both types of restraining ropes used and why? The handling systems used for bring out alpacas, the preparation and shearing. Why having a tidy shorn alpaca (having no tufts tags or cuts) after shearing is so important? This can effect your show team, sales of alpacas also having many health benefits and well being of your alpacas, Shearpac covers all these aspects. Toenail and teeth trimming is available on the day of shearing by us.

7. You may ask what can we do as farmers to help in the shearing process?

There are several things a farmer can have prepared upon the shearing teams arrival. First off is to be ready with a good sense of humor and a smile when your shearing team arrives shearing should be stress free and be a fun day. All other information please contact Shearpac

We all look forward to another successful shearing season. Shearpac would like to thank you all as well as the Shearers for their input and time spent on this article.

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**The
Cost
Of
Shearing**

Shearpac would like to thank everyone for choosing us and our Teams to serve you with your shearing needs over the many years we have been shearing and for this up and coming season. We appreciate your business. In an effort to continue communication with our customers we would like to answer some frequently asked questions that you, our customers have asked over this past few years. I recently read an article regarding preparation and costs for shearing alpacas. I found this a very interesting article and good for alpaca owners to see it from the shearers' point of view. Part of the article brings up the subject of two shearing stations:

1. Why do you use two shearing stations instead of just one?

Over the past 15 years we have discovered that setting up two stations for shearing accomplishes several purposes. First, it allows the Alpaca owners sufficient time to clean up fleece that remains in the shearing area prior to the next animal being shorn. This is important to many Alpaca owners as they are focused on not mixing colors or various fleeces together. Another advantage to setting up two stations for shearing is there is less stress on the animals. (Check out Shearpac's new handling system the Full Johnson, the Fireman and more, developed by Shearpac and their team) Because the shearer is working on another animal, this is giving handlers sufficient time to bring the next animal in, lay them down and prepare them for shearing in a slow relaxing way, without rushing and handling the animals in an uncontrolled manner.

Two shearing stations allow for smooth transitions between animals which is less stressful for everyone. Although it may appear that the shearer is shearing "faster" when there are two stations, this is not the case. A professional alpaca shearer takes the same amount of time on each animal even if he is shearing 1 alpaca or shearing 100 alpacas, your professional shearer will be shearing smoothly and making a clean tidy job on each alpaca regardless of numbers shorn. The difference is the Alpaca shearer does not have a break between animals and this often results in more clean and efficient shearing. The smooth consistent flow of using two shearing stations is not used by every shearing company, or on every property, this will depend on room and alpaca owner requirements, (please ask your shearer what you require prior to your shearing day contact Shearpac to find out more information) however Shearpac has found that this method, although more constant for the shearing team, is best for your animals and the alpaca owners once perfected. From the shearers' point of view it is harder work to be shearing two stations as you are constantly moving and working hard. If you watch a shearer while shearing two shearing stations he does not at any point stop working. Shearers earn their money from hard physical work. Your shearer spends most of his time bent over and shearing alpacas this is extremely hard on their backs knees hips elbows and other joints and this is just the shearing alone. To be asking your shearer to also be handling (preparing your alpacas for shearing) as well as shearing is putting huge amounts of stress on his back and body. (Remembering your professional shearer is working 7 days a week). When doing this your shearer may not have 100% focus on a perfect shearing job for you as he would like, he will always be trying his best to make the best job he can.

Your professional shearer will be 100% focused on shearing

also making sure everything is running smoothly in the shearing shed. You will never have a professional shearer complain about what is being asked of him and is happy to chip in to help when needed. It has been proven that a shearer can use as much energy and lose as much fluids as a marathon runner every day. Taking this into account alpaca shearers can be known to shear everyday for over 100 days through an average shearing season. For some shearers (Shearpac and their teams) this is their lively hood.

2. In the article it asks the owner to be questioning your shearer for a better price if he is shearing two shearing stations, it continues to add, "if you don't succeed ask why you are using this shearer"

This is a very good question. The simple answer is he is most likely a professional shearer, shearing more smoothly and efficiently than anyone else and being the best at what he does. Would you expect an All Black to be paid less now that he is at the top of his game at what he does, Now that he's playing (shearing) more professionally and more efficiently than anyone else? After spending many years training to become a professional would you expect him to be paid less? In all sports and industries the better you become the more you get paid, this is the normal practice. When your plumber, builder, mechanic, lawyer, accountant, doctor or dentist is qualified they are not expected to provide a discount. So should anyone be questioning your shearer when you can see him doing one of the toughest jobs in the world?

3. What are the costs involved in shearing Alpacas?

Some shearing company's charge per alpaca plus travel and extras other shearing company's charge a flat rate for shearing then charge foot trimming teeth trimming etc On average the cost comes out about the same per alpaca? If you are shearing 1 alpaca or shearing 100 alpacas it takes the same amount of time to do so. As you may or may not know there are many hidden costs involved in having a shearing business. The obvious costs are paying the shearer and their teams. The on road expenses for an alpaca shearer are costly as they will travel far and wide, some travel the whole of New Zealand to provide a service, taking into account fuel, car maintenance etc some Shearers may hire cars as the season is a short one. When away from home the Shearers may have to pay for accommodation, (while still paying mortgages or rent and living expenses back home as well as hotels while on the road) often alpaca owners will accommodate their Shearers and this is also very much appreciated by all, this helps keep your Shearers returning every year. Labour when provided comes out of the shearing cost, this maybe one or two guys. This is a huge expense to cover these guys and there on road expenses, they work very hard and are non stop for months on end.

Food expenses (Breakfast Dinner and sometimes lunches on the road, as we are unable to prepare lunches for the day or cook our own Dinner at night to keep cost down) sometime breakfast lunch and dinner maybe provided by the alpaca owners and it is very much appreciated when done so. This also will keep your shearer returning every year with out fail. We would like to thank those of you who provide this hospitality – it is appreciated more than you will ever know by Shearpac and all our Shearers.

Professional Shearers and their teams will be working for 3-4 months non stop, they will often spend at least 2-3 months pre season calling and organizing the shearing runs for the up and coming season this is unpaid work. This will also include maintenance on shearing gear, cars and anything else that needs to be fixed in the off season, time is also spent on preparation for being away for long periods. They will also need to take time off after the shearing season to catch up on general maintenance etc while away.

4. The shearing machines our shearers use are the top of the line which are available.

This is because they do the best job on your animals. These hand pieces are very expensive and as you are aware our shearers often use more than one for each job (normally running 3-4 hand pieces at a time. They generally have to purchase 3-4 new hand pieces each month and carry another 3-4 hand piece as back ups while away. (Shearers normally don't leave home with out 7-8 hand pieces while on the road Shearers will also be replacing them while away) Where as a normal sheep shearer will have 2 hand piece per year, There are other equipment expenses as well such as cutters and combs which need to be sharpened after each use and replaced on a regular basis. An alpaca shearer may go through 20 combs and 40 cutters on a good day, on a bad day there will be a lot more. Where as a sheep shearer will go through 8 combs and about 24 cutter per day (this is a standard sheep shearing day), Shearer will also need a expensive grinder (Sharpener for combs and cutters) Once the shearing team completes a long days work, often shearing at multiple farms each day, they spend several more hours preparing their equipment for the next day of shearing.

As you know shearers are only paid for the shearing they do, they are not paid while traveling between farms yet still incur the expenses of labour fuel and travel etc. Although there may be "cheaper" ways to have your alpacas shorn, Shearpac strives to give our clients the best possible job and experience available. In order to provide this quality service we and all Shearers set their fees accordingly to cover their costs. This is done by all full time professional Shearers at a standard rate. Shearpac and our teams pride ourselves on being on schedule as best we can. This may mean spending many hours driving at night to be on time in the morning, We know that our clients appreciate what we do also appreciate having a professional and quality shearer for their animals.

5. At Shearpac we strive to have the best Alpaca shearers in the world in order to serve our clients well.

We feel it is important to do so for our clients, We find that Alpaca owners want their animals in the best hands. It is very important to Shearpac, associated Shearers and alpaca owners that the less time your alpacas are restrained for shearing regardless of how they are restrained the better. Any longer than 10 minutes can result in muscle fatigue on your alpacas. This season we are bring in to New Zealand a lot more new ideas. We are leading in the shearing industry at the moment and working with the best in the world to always improve and fine tune what is being done. Just to mention a few of them;

- Free style 9 cut shearing system
- Full Johnson handling system
- The Fireman
- Plus many more techniques that help with shearing